

new cases of diabetes, minority groups like Latinos are disproportionately affected.

But diabetes is not the only illness that burdens Hispanic communities more than non-Hispanic populations. Diseases like asthma, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular disease, obesity and cancer consistently plague Latino communities at rates that are simply unacceptable.

As many of you will recall, in 1999, Congress petitioned the Institute of Medicine to conduct a report to assess the extent of racial and ethnic disparities in health care and the resulting disease outcomes. We have been given our answers.

Some of the top research institutions in the country continually report that the health of Hispanics in the U.S. is deteriorating and must be addressed.

For example, 37 percent of non-elderly Latinos are uninsured—a rate twice that of non-Hispanic whites, and most come from working families. The incidence of AIDS among Hispanics is around 200 per 100,000, while it is only 60 per 100,000 among non-Latino whites. list goes on and on.

Latinos are now 16 percent of the total population, so it is imperative that we address the increasing trends in poor Latino health. The need to act on behalf of our Latino communities is great, and today we are being presented with the opportunity to help.

The Hispanic Health Improvement Act is our chance to respond to the data and to commit to the health of our Latino communities across the U.S. This bill is a comprehensive measure focusing exclusively on improving the health among Latino populations. This bill expands the important State Children's Health Insurance Program, S-CHIP, to cover low-income pregnant women and parents, and it gives States the option to cover any individual below 100 percent of poverty under their Medicaid program. It provides for an enhanced 90 percent Federal matching rate to States through Medicaid and S-CHIP to provide language services—like oral interpretation, or translation of written materials—for individuals with limited English proficiency.

These services are extremely critical when one third of Latinos and over 40 percent of Spanish-speaking Latinos report having problems communicating with their health care provider.

The bill also addresses health disparities by establishing programs and grants to respond to diabetes, cancer, asthma, HIV infection, AIDS, obesity, oral health, mental health, and other illnesses. It also recognizes the need to strengthen the diversity in our health care work force by supporting Hispanic-serving health professional schools and training health providers in cultural competency.

As you can see, this legislation is the critical pivot point whereby we can reverse the sliding health of our Latino population.

In conclusion, I want to applaud the leadership of my good friend Congressman Ciro RODRIGUEZ in championing this bill for several years.

I am pleased to be part of this effort and I urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity to protect the future health of Latinos—and all Americans—by cosponsoring this bill.

OBSERVER STATUS FOR TAIWAN

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the World Health Organization's 56th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland this week, and to voice my support of granting Taiwan observer status for WHO functions.

In her opening address to the Assembly, WHO Director-General Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland outlined the key lessons learned so far from the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and called for expanded surveillance and rapid response to save lives and protect economies against new diseases in the future.

In February, the world was introduced to this dangerous new disease. It is believed that the current epidemic originated in China, rapidly spread to East and Southeast Asia, and then onto Europe, the United States, Canada, and the rest of the world in a manner that left many in the medical community searching for answers.

Global infection rates seemed to peak in mid-March, but the persistent nature of SARS continues to raise concern among both medical professionals and government officials.

The United States has been able to keep this disease at bay—but other members of the international community have had more difficulty dealing with the disease and some international organizations have hindered the sharing of information and resources, most notably with Taiwan.

The World Health Organization has reported over 7,800 cases of SARS worldwide in 33 countries, with more than 600 deaths. More than 7,000 of these cases have been reported in Asia. The people of Taiwan have been especially affected. They have recorded 344 cases of SARS and 40 deaths, but have no representation in the World Health Organization. The international community does not largely recognize theirs as a legitimate government, thus limiting the degree of help that is available to this tiny, democratic nation. If Taiwan was able to participate as an observer of WHO, additional resources could be brought to bear to address their domestic health crisis.

More needs to be done to contain this disease and a good first step would be to grant WHO observer status to Taiwan.

On June 17, 2003, WHO plans to hold an international conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to review the epidemiological, clinical management and laboratory findings on SARS and to discuss global control strategies. Key participants in the response to the current outbreaks and other public health authorities will be invited to attend the conference. But since Taiwan is not even granted observer status in WHO, it has not been invited to participate in this vital convention. This is especially troubling, since recent reports show that Taiwan is at the epicenter of this epidemic.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the admittance of Taiwan's health minister to attend the WHO's conference on infectious diseases next month in Malaysia.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY BONILLA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2003

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express the deep admiration I share with each member of the Texas Delegation for Representative LARRY COMBEST. It is with a heavy heart that I stand here today to send off my friend from West Texas. LARRY and his lovely wife Sharon have truly made a difference to his constituents, the state of Texas and the nation.

While serving as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, LARRY proved his true leadership during the deliberation of the 2002 Farm Bill. Through long, hard days and nights working tirelessly on the measure, LARRY never lost sight of the true reason for the bill. The farmers and ranchers of this nation owe LARRY a great debt of gratitude for his distinguished service. That being said, the true measure of LARRY COMBEST may not be his astute knowledge of agriculture and politics, but the balance he has kept between his public life and his private life. It is apparent to anyone who knows LARRY that his family has always been his top priority.

I commend LARRY for his great service, and wish him the best as he and Sharon embark together on their next adventure in life.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST

SPEECH OF

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 19, 2003

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, when America's farmers and ranchers found themselves devoid of a proper safety net while facing record low prices, they found an advocate in LARRY COMBEST. As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, LARRY utilized his trademark discipline to develop a balanced farm bill, seeking the input of countless producers.

His efforts resulted in a flexible farm policy that will provide stability to American agriculture producers for years to come. LARRY's leadership and strong voice will be sorely missed not only by his constituents in West Texas, but by all of rural America.

Further, Mr. Speaker, those of us who have had the pleasure of working with LARRY hold him in the highest regard not only as the visionary behind American farm policy, but also as a friend.

LARRY and his lovely wife Sharon were among the first people to welcome my wife and me to Washington when I arrived for the 107th Congress. They extended neighborly compassion and sound guidance, the very things you'd expect from a West Texas couple. Karen and I are truly grateful for their friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I wish LARRY COMBEST the best in his coming retirement.